

# OPINION

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## Wind power a boon for schools

**W**e applaud Nebo School District's proposal to generate its own wind power atop one of its elementary schools.

According to the Daily Herald's Jan. 24 edition, six Nebo

### GUEST OPINION

District schools are in the path of one of the country's best wind resources that potentially could be developed to produce electricity profitably. Pending state approval and financing, the Nebo district hopes to install a turbine large enough to generate all of one school's electricity needs.

With soaring energy prices squeezing tight school budgets, money saved from reduced electricity expenses could be directed toward Nebo's first priority — educating children.

Nebo district's unusual proposal isn't new, however. In 1993, Spirit Lake Community School District in Iowa received national attention for installing its first wind turbine on school property. Considered outlandish initially, the turbine has generated more than enough electricity for the school and has provided about \$20,000 in annual energy savings.

A second larger turbine was added in 2002, and once paid off by 2007, the energy savings are expected to grow to about \$125,000 annually.

Milford High School in Milford, Utah, has a similar initiative in the works. A teacher and his students participated in the Utah Energy Office's anemometer program and found that the Milford area has good wind resources as well. Should further testing prove that the wind is sufficient for electricity generation, Milford may develop its wind resources to help power the school.

Wind is America's fastest-

growing energy source. While Utah has significant wind resources (see [www.wind.utah.gov](http://www.wind.utah.gov)), they remain largely untapped.

Several other western states, however, including Wyoming, Texas, California, Oregon and Washington, are seizing wind power's economic benefits — wind royalties for landowners, construction and utility jobs, and business opportunities for steel, roads and high-technology services.

Wind development in Utah could bring similar economic opportunities and support schoolchildren in three significant ways:

► Wind turbines on school property could generate power for schools to lower electricity costs, and surplus power could be sold to the utility grid. Additionally, schools could sell "green tags" — credits for generating clean, renewable energy — to utilities and companies that participate in market-based programs for reducing emissions.

Green tags are compliance accounting devices that companies trade to show that they have supported the production of sufficient quantities of "green energy" to offset their emissions of "brown energy" from fossil fuels. Green tag markets are expected to grow in the future.

► Wind parks developed on Utah's School and Institutional Trust Lands could generate lease payments for Utah's permanent school endowment fund. Some trust lands are in locations likely to have developable wind resources.

► Wind development on private land could boost property tax revenues, which are typically paid by wind developers, not landowners, and go to support local schools. The 300-megawatt Stateline Wind Energy Center, straddling the Washington-Oregon border,

near Touchet, Wash., not only provides generous lease payments to eight rural landowners, but also generates approximately \$1.5 million in tax revenues each year.

How can Utah take advantage of wind's opportunities?

Last year, Wyoming's Legislature passed a sales tax exemption for equipment used to generate electricity from renewable sources, such as wind turbines, and it has been credited for attracting the new widely publicized \$143 million wind project near Evanston. Wyoming has determined that the project's long-term economic benefits will far outweigh the short-term loss from the tax exemption.

Utah needs a comparable renewable energy sales tax exemption to be competitive for attracting multimillion-dollar wind projects.

As governor of Texas in 1999, George W. Bush signed renewable portfolio standard legislation, requiring that a portion of Texas' electricity come from renewable sources. The RPS includes a system of tradable "green tags," providing flexibility in how energy producers comply with the law. RPS has been so successful that Texas moved from having virtually no commercial wind energy to become the nation's second-largest wind producer behind California.

Nebo district's proposal provides a glimpse of how wind power could benefit a Utah school. By passing tax incentives or RPS, Utah's Legislature could unlock wind power's significant opportunities for all of Utah's schoolchildren.

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